

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (94) in DH/SEB/CD/8/19/1

來函檔號 Your Ref :

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7 November 2014

Dear Operator/ Manager/ Infection Control Officer,

Vigilance against acute gastroenteritis

I would like to draw your attention to the prevention of acute gastroenteritis (AGE) in the community as we are approaching the traditional peak season of the disease.

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of Department of Health (DH) recorded an increasing number of institutional outbreaks of acute gastroenteritis in the recent two weeks. There were five and six institutional AGE outbreaks recorded for the week 44 (week ending 1 November) and the first five days of week 45 (week ending 8 November), respectively as compared with 0-3 outbreaks per week for the previous months. Besides, the sentinel surveillance based at General Outpatient Clinics (GOPC) also detected a corresponding increase in AGE activity. The weekly consultation rates of acute diarrhoeal diseases based at sentinel GOPC increased from 3.9 to 4.5 (number of cases per 1000 consultations) from the week ending 25 October to week ending 1 November.

Acute gastroenteritis is usually caused by norovirus or rotavirus infection. It is highly contagious and can be transmitted by consumption of contaminated food, contact with the vomitus or excreta of the infected persons, contaminated objects and aerosol spread with contaminated droplets of splashed vomitus. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, fever and malaise. Although infections are usually mild and self-limiting, they are highly infectious and may result in outbreaks that are



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control

difficult to control. It is a frequent cause of outbreaks in institutions. Such outbreaks may occur throughout the year but are known to occur more frequently in winter months.

To prevent outbreaks of viral gastroenteritis, strict personal, food and environmental hygiene with particular attention to handling of vomitus and faecal matter are very important. I would recommend you to take the following steps:

1. Remind residents and staff to maintain personal hygiene, especially proper hand-washing with liquid soap before meals and after going to the toilet;
2. Remind staff, residents and their families to maintain proper food hygiene. Ensure all food is adequately cooked especially high-risk food like shellfish;
3. Train staff on the proper management and disinfection of the environment after vomiting incidents:
 - Keep residents away from the area during the cleaning process.
 - Wear gloves and a mask while removing the vomitus.
 - Use disposable towels to wipe away all the vomitus from outside inward, before applying diluted bleach (1 in 49) to the surface and the neighbouring area (e.g. within 2 metres of the vomitus).
 - Leave bleach on the soiled surface for 15-30 minutes to allow time for the bleach to inactivate viruses before rinsing the surface with water and mop dry.
 - Floor mops should not be used for cleaning the vomitus.
 - Wash hands thoroughly afterwards.
4. Staff who represent with vomiting or diarrhoea should refrain from work and seek medical advice.

As daycare and residential institutions are at risk of communicable disease outbreak, I would urge you to keep vigilance against communicable diseases. The “***Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Residential Care Homes for the Elderly***” and “***Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities***” contains practical information and control measures on prevention of communicable diseases and is available at: <http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/guideline/478/35.html>.

If you notice an increase in number of residents or staff with symptoms of viral gastroenteritis, please inform the Central Notification Office of CHP as early as possible at Fax: 2477 2770 or Tel: 2477 2772 so that investigation and control measures can be initiated as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health